

Questioning for All

This strategy promotes student participation in classroom questioning sessions and increases the quality of responses by considering the diverse ways students think and learn and by creating an environment where all learners feel that their ideas and contributions are valued and that they are able to succeed.

Teacher Preparation:

1. Prescreen questions to be used in class.
2. Plan for using the Guidelines for Effective Questioning.

Lesson Plan:

1. Set the purpose for a question and answer session.
Examples:
 - Activate prior knowledge
 - Extend current knowledge
 - Apply content knowledge
 - Deepen current understanding
 - Review previous lesson
 - Review for test
2. Provide needed materials for the response system(s) that will be used.
3. Conduct the question session according to the Guidelines for Effective Questioning.

Guidelines for Effective Questioning

“The art of questioning is central to the practice of teaching.”

“[W]ell-crafted questions are a great way for teachers to determine what their students know, need to know, and misunderstand.”

Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey, *Checking for Understanding*, ASCD 2007, p. 36.

“It is probably safe to say that cueing and questioning are at the heart of classroom practice. In fact, research in classroom behavior indicates that cueing and questioning might account for as much as 80 percent of what occurs in a given classroom on a given day (see Davis, O.L., & Tinsley, 1967; Fillipone, 1998).”

Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, *Classroom Instruction that Works*, ASCD 2001, p. 113

Questions are effective when

- The questions are thoughtfully planned.
- They activate prior knowledge.
- The teacher’s verbal and non-verbal behaviors indicate an interest in the responses and the individual(s) responding.
- Teachers are actively considering student responses in order to determine follow-up and the next instructional steps.

The Guidelines for Effective Questioning consist of 5 steps:

1. Plan ahead:

- Determine appropriate opportunities for questioning.
- Preview the questions to be used and prepare additional ones if needed.
 - Questions should align with the content objectives.
 - Questions should be purposeful.
 - Questions should engage students in deeper thinking, not merely prompt students to recall information.
 - Include questions that elicit inferences.
 - Focus on what is important as opposed to what is unusual.
- Match prepared questions to students. Consider student preparedness and need.

Adapted from various sources, including:

Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey, *Checking for Understanding*, ASCD 2007

Robert J. Marzano, Debra Pickering, Jane Pollock, *Classroom Instruction that Works*, ASCD 2001

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Guidelines for Effective Questioning (cont.)

2. Promote student participation.

- Provide ample wait time.
 - Before asking the question (to encourage focus and depth of answers)
 - After asking the question but before calling on a student (to engage all students, enable them to digest the question and retrieve information)
 - After calling on a student to respond (to enable the responder to formulate a response)
 - After the student finishes the response (to value the answer and to enable all students to digest the response)
- Provide non-verbal support.
 - Eye contact (look directly at the speaker, maintain eye contact)
 - Facial expressions (smile, express surprise, excitement)
 - Body posture (use gestures, express openness)
 - Physical distance (adjust your position in the classroom)
 - Silence (don't interrupt, honor wait time after student stops)
 - Withhold judgment
- Provide brief verbal support.
 - Acknowledgments (i.e., "go ahead," "yes," "I understand")
 - Sub-summaries (rephrase main ideas presented by students)
- Practice various scaffolding methods to cue students.

Note: Scaffolding directs a student to information necessary for formulating an answer.

 - Prompt with key words, phrases, symbols
 - Reference the text, charts, or other sources of information
- Utilize "think-pair-share" as a support for students to develop responses.
 - Individual thinking time
 - Discussion with partner
 - Resulting response brought to class discussion
- Vary the method of response.
 - One-at-a-time responses
 - Students volunteer
 - Teacher calls on students
 - Whole-class responses
 - Index cards
 - Hand signals
 - Signs or boards (dry-erase, magnetic) simultaneously held up
 - Audience response systems (hand-held devices)
 - Entry and exit cards (strategies 4-19 and 4-20)

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Guidelines for Effective Questioning (cont.)

3. Follow up constructively.

- Increase the number of follow-up questions.
- Probe for richer evidence of student understanding.
- Question further to extend responses.
 - “Why?” “Do you agree?” “Can you elaborate?” “Tell me more.” “Can you give an example?”
- Have students defend their reasoning against different points of view.
- Ask students to “unpack their thinking.”
 - “Describe (think aloud) how you arrived at your answer.”
- Choose words that communicate respect for both the student and the work.
- Praise student efforts.
- Provide feedback to students responses
 - Corrective in nature: explain what is correct and what is incorrect
 - Timely
 - Specific to a criterion: tell students where they stand relative to a specific target level of skill or knowledge
 - Student self evaluation
- Assist students who respond incorrectly.
 - Rephrase the question.
 - Probe for additional information after an incomplete answer.
 - Probe for misunderstandings and misinformation and then clarify.
 - Check for understanding (same student, same concept later in lesson).
- Pause
 - Convey respect for the speaker.
 - Provide teacher with the opportunity to analyze the response and make decisions about scaffolds and feedback.

4. Provide plenty of opportunity for practice.

- Increase the number of questions asked.
- Increase the number of individual student responses called for.
- Increase the level of questioning.
- Provide additional settings for questioning.
 - Peer-to-peer questioning and answering
 - Socratic seminar

5. Use the student responses to determine the next instructional steps.

Adapted from various sources, including:

Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey, *Checking for Understanding*, ASCD 2007

Robert J. Marzano, Debra Pickering, Jane Pollock, *Classroom Instruction that Works*, ASCD 2001

Susan M. Brookhart, *How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students*, ASCD 2008

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